

burns or mechanical means? These questions lie at the core of the development of any wildland urban interface fire mitigation plan.

Table 2

**10-Year National Average of Wildland
Fire Causes (1988-97)**

	Human Cause	Lightning Cause
Number of Fires	102,694	13,879
Percent of Fires	88	12
Acres Burned	1,942,106	2,110,810
Percentage of Acreage	48	52

Source: U. S. Fire Administration 2000b.

The Big Blowup of 1910

Historically, there have been three major wildland fires in North Idaho since European settlement. The first of these is the Big Blowup in August 1910 documented in Stephen Pyne's *Year of the Fires*. As Pyne notes, 1910 was a bad fire year across the country, but the fire in Northeastern Idaho and Western Montana was perhaps the most disastrous (Pyne 2001). More than 3,000,000 acres burned and 88 people died. Although the fire was primarily in adjoining Shoshone County, some acreage in Kootenai County was also involved. The City of Wallace was partially destroyed during this fire.

A dry spring and summer followed a normal winter in 1910. July was intensely hot with dry southwest winds (House 1996). On August 20, these southwest winds reached gale force resulting in a numerous small fires, both human and lightning created, fanned into one of the worst wildfires in the history of the country. It was during this fire that forest service employee Ed Pulaski saved the lives of many of his crew. He subsequently invented the wildland firefighter's primary tool, the Pulaski.

The Sundance Fire

1967 was one of the worst fire seasons on record with 59 days of very high or extreme fire danger. National forests were closed until September 11 (House 1996). Lightning started fires throughout the summer. For example, on July 12 there were 131 fires and 818 throughout August. Several fires began on Sundance Mountain near Coolin and Priest Lake at the end of August. Northeast winds began to blow at 60 miles per hour. Humidity was less than 35%. The winds then quickly shifted from the southwest and the fire on the mountain made a big run on September 1 consuming over 56,000 acres in a single day and night. Although this fire presented an enormous risk, property damage was not equivalent to the 1910 fire.